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ABSTRACT

This paper first examines how the graduate institute of teacher education at Bank Street College of Education, New York, has worked to foster reflective practice over time and across program components. It examines the mission and structures that have been enacted to this end and identifies ongoing challenges encountered. The paper first discusses how Bank Street faculty define reflection and how Bank Street courses and fieldwork support reflective practice. Next, the paper examines how the portfolio process supports reflective practice, focusing on the decision to implement portfolios and the structure of the portfolio. The impact of context is discussed, looking at the influence of external documentation and internal documentation. Finally, the paper focuses on embedded challenges, including developing new habits of mind, having feelings of risk and vulnerability, and meeting the needs of today's classrooms. Evidence suggests that reflective practice can be nurtured and extended within the context of teacher education programs. The presence of a cohesive discourse community supports the development of reflective habits of mind for teachers and teacher educators. Participants must be constantly vigilant to keep the context of the dialogue conducive to safe expression of all points of view. (Contains 30 references.) (SM)

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FOSTERING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: TAKING A LOOK AT CONTEXT

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The question was asked: "What is reflection?" The students responded:

A reflection is like a jazz improvisation. It gives back something of its inspiration but makes new meaning. A reflection is unlike a reproduction in that it adds something to the original message.
(Featherstone, Bank Street College, 2000)

Reflection involves internal thinking and writing, dialoguing with peers, colleagues, and teachers, revisiting recent and log-past experiences. Reflection is not a knee -jerk process; rather it involves careful thought, consideration of language, and evaluation from a range of perspectives.
(Boltax Bank Street College, 2000)

From these responses, a new question emerges: How can programs of teacher education help teachers to develop reflective habits of mind and apply them to their classroom practice? In the Spring 2000 newsletter from the Center on English Learning & Achievement, researchers Pam Grossman and Sheila Valencia liken teacher development to pentimento - the artistic term denoting the emergence over time of earlier images and forms that have been changed or painted over. They find that although concepts and pedagogy emphasized in progressive programs of teacher education are often invisible in the classrooms of first year teachers, they resurface in subsequent years. The teachers they interviewed attribute their ability to reach continuously for more ideal forms of instruction to the habits of reflection fostered in their teacher education programs (English Update, Spring, 2000).

Acknowledging the importance and the complexity of reflective practice, this paper explores the ways in which one graduate institution of teacher education has worked toward this goal over time and across program components. It examines the mission and structures that have been enacted to this

end and identifies ongoing challenges that have been and continue to be encountered in the process.

Bank Street: A Theoretical Perspective

In October, 1930, Lucy Sprague Mitchell instituted a program of teacher education at the Bureau of Educational Experiments at 69 Bank Street in New York City. Describing this program, later to become the Bank Street College of Education, Mitchell wrote:

> *Our aim is to help students develop a scientific attitude towards their work and toward life. To us this means an attitude of eager, alert observations, a constant questioning of old procedure in the light of new observations, a use of the world as well as of books as source material; an experimental open-mindedness; and an effort to keep as reliable records as the situation permits in order to base the future upon actual knowledge of the experiences of the past.*
>
> *Our aim is equally to help students develop and express the attitude of the artist towards their work and towards life. To us this means an attitude of relish, of emotional drive, a genuine participation in some creative phase of work, and a sense that joy and beauty are legitimate possessions of all human beings young and old. We are not interested in perpetuation of any special "school of thought." Rather, we are interested in imbuing teachers with an experimental, critical and ardent approach to their work. If we accomplish this, we are ready to leave the future of education to them. (Mitchell, in Antler, 309)*

Mitchell's goals, articulated fifty years earlier, in many ways presage Schon's description of the reflective practitioner (Schon, 1987). Institutional structures and pedagogies have been designed to foster the habits of mind and habits of language that support reflective practice among both faculty and students. This does not mean that all who dwell within the portals of Bank Street College hold the same definition of reflection or value it in exactly the same ways. However, it does mean that the language of reflective practice permeates the dominant discourse of the institution and has done so for the past seventy years.

This discourse takes on particular significance when examined in the context of recent research on cognition. There are many important points of connection between Mitchell's words and this research. Traditionally, cognition has been viewed as an individual function; learning has been seen as the acquisition of knowledge and skills through the manipulation of thoughts and symbols inside the mind of the individual. However, current studies in cognition support a "situated" perspective. According to this view, cognition and learning are "(a) situated in particular physical and social

contexts, (b) social in nature; and (c) distributed across the individual, other persons, and tools" (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p.4).

Knowledge and the valued ways of expressing this knowledge are produced and shaped within the context of "discourse communities". The individual brings a desire to make sense of experience to the discourse community; the community provides the cognitive tools - ideas, theories, concepts - that the individual uses as a frame of reference for interpreting experience (Dewey, 1938; Putnam & Borko, 2000). For teachers, schools and institutions of teacher education are primary "discourse communities".

> *One's teaching, what one knows about teaching, and what one believes is possible and desirable in one's teaching all vary according to the context in which the teaching is done. (Hargreaves, 1996, p.15)*

Learning, from this perspective, is a process of social- construction. It is the outcome of enculturation into a community's habits of mind and ways of acting and interacting as much - if not more than - the result of direct instruction in specific skills, concepts and attitudes. However, the process is not purely assimilationist. Each individual experiences the process of enculturation through a unique set of experiences which in turn builds on his or own set of prior knowledge and experiences. As Dewey writes: "Every experience lives on in future experiences" (1938, 63, p27).

Thus, the individual transforms the knowledge of the community as he or she internalizes it. Institutional context and the processes of enculturation are always multi-directional and dialectical. As the individual is shaped by the community, the community and its discourse are shaped by the unique experience of each participating member. In this way, communities and individuals both preserve and change their beliefs and practices over time. For the purposes of this discussion, the communities are schools and institutions of higher learning, the individuals are teachers and teacher educators.

From the perspective of situated cognition, it becomes less important to ask what teachers know than what can they think and do at particular times in particular contexts (Ball in Putnam & Borko, p. 5). In order to examine teachers' beliefs and practices, it then becomes important to consider how the language and structures of teacher education institutions implicitly and explicitly scaffold the habits of mind that undergird specific forms of practice. These questions are particularly relevant to a

consideration of reflective teaching, a form of practice that is new to many teachers and teacher educators.

This paper employs the lens of situated cognition to identify and examine the discourse community at Bank Street College. It explores the ways in which the past and present language and structures of the institution provide a cohesive set of tools to support students' efforts to become reflective teachers and change agents in the contexts of schools that do not always value or practice such practice (Lortie, 1976; Freire, 1984; Sarason, 1990; Putnam & Borko, 2000). It also examines the challenges that are posed by these same structures and values.

In the passages cited above, Mitchell speaks of "alert observations", "constant questioning of old procedure in the light of new observations", "a use of the world" the keeping of "reliable records", and a process of teacher education that is interested in "imbuing teachers with an experimental, critical and ardent approach to their work". I would like to suggest that this goal of imbuing teachers with particular habits of mind and habits of practice refers to a conscious process of enculturation (Putnam & Borko, 2000), a process that is as much a part of the teacher education process at Bank Street today as it was in the 1930's. These habits of mind and practice are inextricably entwined with the development of reflection.

How do Bank Street faculty define reflection?

> *Reflection always involves analysis. It is not just recording and thinking about something, but it is also looking at it through different lenses...looking at the conditions that brought an experience about, looking at the people involved, looking at yourself, looking at what your responses are and examining why they are the way they are. (Esther Rosenfeld, Faculty: Principal's Institute, 2/00)*

> *To me, reflection is the ability to look critically at one's actions -past, present and future) and to gauge the effect that these actions have had on oneself and others, to be conscious of this effect, and to predict the effect of these actions. To be of use, reflection should cause one to modify one's actions in order to obtain the most positive effect, or to stay the course if those actions are judged to be the most appropriate ones. (Olga Romero, Bilingual / Special Education, 2/00):*

These definitions and others voiced by many current faculty members reflect a Deweyan perspective: true education involves a restructuring of an individual's thinking in ways that increase the complexity and integration of prior knowledge and experience (Dewey, 1938). Together, they represent the views of a discourse

community that sees reflection as a tool for learners of all ages "to find ways of expressing what they know, what misconceptions they are discovering and what they are struggling to understand" (Vascellaro, 00).

> *It has always seemed to me that my job as advisor, instructor, and portfolio mentor is to get students to think more deeply about their experiences and the not-so-obvious implications of their and others' actions, and to examine problems and issues from as many perspectives as possible. Graduate study would seem to have these activities as its center; beyond that, professionals engaged in working with children have an obligation to step outside the rush of daily events and try to be as "reflective" about what they are doing as humanly possible, although it's not always easy. (Gil Schmerler, 2/00)*

Such strongly voiced beliefs document the living presence of Mitchell's vision. This vision includes the belief that reflection will lead to action. It follows that if teachers are to be prepared to work for social change by addressing the social and educational needs of children, teachers themselves, need guided opportunities to challenge and reflect upon these experiences (Mitchell, 1935, 2000; Nager, N. & Shapiro, E., 2000). To this end, opportunities to engage in reflective practice have been woven throughout courses, activities, and ongoing dialogue in the Bank Street programs. In each case, the process involves the effort to develop the kinds of alert observation, constant questioning, and the exploration of real world situations against the background of both theory and personal experience that Mitchell called for sixty-five years ago.

How do Bank Street courses support reflective practice?

Throughout the courses of study at Bank Street, the following expectations are articulated:

1) teachers will endeavour to make sense of the theory and practices that they are learning within the context of their own experiences, both personal and professional
2) 2) teachers will question both their own beliefs and those of the theorists they are studying on an ongoing basis. The courses are designed to provide teachers with the kinds of experiences that it is hoped that they will provide for their students.

In a child development course, students are asked to keep weekly logs in which they respond to the readings. In the course syllabus, they are told:

> *It is anticipated that you may encounter some "cognitive dissonance" as you come across concepts that differ from your own perceptions and understandings. This is good! When you have a strong negative reaction, be aware of it and write about it. Also, try to reflect on your response. This can be an important and very effective tool in your development of a reflective teaching practice. ... It is also likely that this process will strengthen your understanding of child development. (Lenk, 1999)*

In a course examining the foundations of education, teachers are asked to:

> *Recount in four to five pages the educational history of your family . Examine how the learning strategies, values, and types of education by your immediate family and your forebears relate to your own vision of education. If possible, place your story into a larger social context of community values, practices, and significant even. (Freidus,1996)*

In a course that prepares teachers to engage in the conduct of action research, the teachers are asked to consider the following questions:

> *Why am I doing this study? Why am I doing it at this site? What is my relationship to the participants? What are the participants' roles in the design, data collection, analysis and authorship of the study?*
>
> *How is my research problem supported and/or challenged by current thought in the field? (Pignatelli, 1999)*

In each course, the assignment is designed to foster observation, the development of critical questioning, and the exploration of real world situations against the background of both theory and personal experience. The effort is being made to help teachers add their voices to the "Grand Conversations" of education and to examine their beliefs and practices against the backdrop of this conversation.

How does field work support reflective practice

At the core of all Bank Street Graduate School programs, there is advisement. Advisement, occurring in the year of supervised field work, includes a number of traditional components of field work: classroom observations by faculty supervisors called "advisors", individual conferences between advisors and student teachers, three way conferences with cooperating teachers for pre-service students and with administrators for in-service teachers. However, in each of these a dialogical model supplants the traditional "banking" structures of education (Freire, 1984).

Conferences: Advisors meet twice monthly with their advisees in regularly scheduled individual conferences. These take two forms; the goal of each is the development of reflective practice. The first is a personal conference in which discussion is related to a student's interests, observations, and concerns. The second is a post-observation conference directly related to classroom issues. These conferences may include a cooperating or supervising administrator at different times during the year.

Post- observation conferences do not incorporate checklists or comparable evaluation tools. Their goal is to move the locus of critique from advisor to student. For this reason, conferences almost invariably begin with an advisor saying: "What did you think? How did you feel the lesson went?" In these conversations, students are encouraged to articulate their intended goals, reflect on the design and implementation of their lessons, and consider the ways in which they were successful and/or unsuccessful. During this process, the advisor pose a series of probing questions designed to scaffold the student's process of self-critique. The focus of these conferences is not on whether a lesson is good or bad, but on what works and why.

> *I ask my students, "What were you thinking of at such and such time? In responding to this, they become aware that they were making a decision at that time and at hundreds of other times a day. ...Reflection, in this sense, means constant awareness .*
>
> *I then tell them that what they decide is not as important as the awareness that a decision has to be made, and also that they need to be able to think on their feet and make a reasonable choice, and they need to be able to articulate this choice. If it is the "wrong" choice, the lesson will not work well, so they will learn from that how to do it the next time. So there really is no wrong choice. (Rena Rice, Pre-service Program, 2/00)*

In addition to these structures, advisement includes conference group. Conference group is a weekly seminar in which each faculty member meets together with his or her five to seven advisees. These meetings are designed to help teachers and teacher leaders make meaning of their personal and professional experiences through the sharing of stories and reflection on these stories. Ayers writes:

> *Advisement (the conference group) was like no other experience I have ever had as a learner. The curriculum was emergent; the experiences we ourselves had were the raw material for reflection and critique. I was a student, but I was also a teacher (1991, p. 28).*

Mitchell's position (1935) that there is no desire to perpetuate any one school of thought or a single set of classroom practices still hold true. There are, however, values that are desired outcomes of these meetings. These are fostered through an open-ended dialogical process. Conversations related to personal and professional experience lead groups to construct and reflect upon a picture of a teacher who respects children, is committed to his or her work, creates an environment in which learners feel free to take risks, and nurtures a sense of wonder in children. The values that are implicitly and explicitly conveyed through conference group build upon course goals. In each case, process and assignments support the active construction of learning by individuals of all ages, peer interaction as a source of learning and support, and the importance of reflection on one's own practice (Shapiro, 1991).

The sharing of personal experiences, hopes, and fears helps to weave a diverse group of individuals into a community of learners. This process, continues the enculturation of participants into the discourse of reflective teaching. It provides an opportunity for participants to examine pedagogical strategies that are consonant with this vision of good teaching and identify ways of applying them in diverse classrooms.

> *In conference group, we all listened to each other. I think that we began to be more reflective. As we began to trust ourselves and our friends, we began to think critically both about our own experiences and each others'. Then we would go out and try things a little differently. (Student Interview, May 1997)*

In the Principal's Institute, a Bank Street program that prepares educational administrators to support reflective teaching in the New York City schools, faculty members use a variety of strategies to promote reflective practice throughout the advisement process. Taking the position that reflection is a learned behavior, advisors use journals to move people deeper into the process.

> *I think that introspection leads to reflection. Some people are not introspective at all. They deal with the what if, the here and now. For whatever reasons, they live on top of all that. They don't go below. We try to lead them in.*

> *We respond to our students journals on an ongoing basis and our responses are usually probes: "Why do you think this happened? Why do you think you responded the way you did? What are the conditions that created this situation?" So we are pushing them to probe more deeply. And, if they still remain on the surface, we meet with them and we'll talk about what the issues are that they have presented and talk them*

through a process of reflecting about these issues. Then we say, 'Now you are at the point of reflection (Esther Rosenfeld, 2/00).

How does the Portfolio Process support reflective practice?

The Decision to Implement Portfolios

The motivation to implement portfolios at Bank Street emerged from a desire to explore new pedagogies for preparing teachers to meet the needs of today's classrooms. When Lucy Sprague Mitchell began the Bureau of Educational Experiments , the institution was preparing teachers for work in independent schools. Over time, the institutional focus broadened to include the preparation of teachers and children working in both public and private contexts. Today, Bank Street has been described as a "private institution with a public mission" (Augusta Kavner, President: Bank Street College, September, 1995).

The student body of the graduate school, the classrooms in which they train, and the classrooms in which they will ultimately teach increasingly reflect the diversity of the New York metropolitan area. Consequently, there has been an ongoing concern to examine the mesh between the traditional pedagogies and structures of Bank Street and the needs of today's teachers and classrooms. This kind of examination of practice is part of Bank Street tradition. Even before the Bureau decided to embark on a program of teacher education, Mitchell developed an educational Credo that called for "flexibility when confronted with change and ability to relinquish patterns that no longer fit the present.'" (Mitchell, 1916).

In accord with this tradition, a committee was appointed in 1992 to explore the implementation of portfolios as an alternative to thesis and directed essay as an exit requirement for the Masters degree. The committee was charged with determining whether and how a portfolio process would be consonant with Bank Street's educational vision. The June, 1993 report made by this committee to the faculty reads:

> *During the 1992-93 academic year, a committee was formed to explore the use of portfolios as an alternative option for the culminating project. Many of us had been reading about the diverse uses of portfolios in the educational process and were eager to see how they might work for us and our teachers. The promise is great for the following reasons:*
>
> *1. The theory behind portfolios meshes with the Deweyan perspective that learning is comprised of an experiential continuum in which new knowledge is built upon and mediated by prior*

knowledge and values. In portfolios, this would take place through a process of conscious reflection on one's teaching experiences.
2. Portfolios are consistent with Bank Street's constructivist vision of learning. Portfolios will allow students opportunities to build their own educational vision through active engagement with content.
3. Portfolios hold promise for expanding the traditional structures of education in order to allow more diverse voices to be heard.

A subsequent report (7/93), recommending that the portfolio option should be adopted on a permanent basis, states that the portfolio represents an appropriate means for synthesizing completed material, for reflecting on the interstices of practice and theory, and for initiating further study. Portfolios were described as a pedagogical tool through which faculty and students with very different backgrounds, disciplines, and learning and teaching styles might engage together in a process of mutual learning.

According to Cagan (1978 in Goodman, 1995, p.4) "the effectiveness [of a given pedagogical activity] depends on the extent to which adults are clear in their understanding of the ideological underpinnings of this pedagogy." There appeared to be a goodness-of-fit between the structure and purpose of portfolios and the vision and practice of Bank Street. The institutional vision would support the pedagogy and the pedagogy would support the vision of an academic institution that valued reflective, learner centered practice. And so, for many, portfolios became a part of the educational experience.

The Structure of the Portfolio

The portfolio design that was recommended by the committee and which has remained substantially the same since its inception include:

1. An Articulated Theme - The portfolio as defined at Bank Street is directly related to an articulated theme. In most cases this theme emerges from common threads running through artifacts; the theme does not dictate the selection of artifacts but highlights patterns among them. Over the years, themes have included such topics as *Race, Class & Outsider Status, The Teacher as Builder of Community; Understanding Difference; The Politics of Literacy.*

2. Artifacts - Six artifacts document an understanding of or competency in four domains (human development, curriculum, the social context of teaching, educational history and philosophy) that undergird the programs of teacher preparation. These artifacts are personal representations of the student's

professional knowledge base. Artifacts are represented through diverse media including but not limited to audio-tapes, video tapes, picture collages, charts, graphs, and a variety of writing genres.

3. Captions - A one to two page caption accompanies each artifact. These captions, informed by theory and personal reflection, provide a rationale for the inclusion of the artifact in the portfolio and relate the artifact to an emergent theme connecting the artifacts. Captions provide responses to the questions: What have I learned from the experience represented by this artifact? What implications does the experience represented by this artifact have for my classroom practice? How has this artifact shaped or been shaped by my personal and professional vision of education? How does the artifact bring to life the theory I have studied?

4. Framing Statements - An introduction of three to five pages articulates the theme and relates it to the individual's philosophy of teaching. A concluding statement, also three to five pages, synthesizes the work included in the portfolio and, with references to relevant theory, discusses the educational implications of the theme and the student's personal journey.

These components define what is to be addressed. How these requirements are to be addressed - what is to be included and how it is to be represented - are not specified and differ from portfolio to portfolio. This lack of specificity requires teachers to reflect on what they know and how they want to represent this knowledge.

In addition to these structural requirements, portfolio at Bank Street involves "process" requirements as well. These have been shaped and reshaped over the years. Today, they include:

1. Individual Process - The individual's search for and reflection upon benchmarks of his or her own professional growth and development

2. Dyadic Process - A series of dialogical meetings between portfolio candidate and his or her mentor in which the sharing of thoughts, the telling of story, and the asking of questions facilitate engagement in both content and reflection

3. Group Process - A monthly series of faculty-facilitated peer group meetings designed to create a community of shared practice whose member engage

together in identifying, supporting, and extending the professional development of self and other.

Since most participating students construct their portfolios following their field work year, the group process component is able to build upon the processes and behaviors developed in conference group. Like advisement, the goal of portfolio is to afford students an opportunity to become engaged in an open-ended, emergent, process that facilitates the linking of experiences that are personal and professional, past and present, inter and intra-personal (Bloomfield, 1991). These experiences together provide a strong foundation for the development of reflective practice.

For most participants, experiences in conference group generally create a greater sense of comfort with emergent structures, a familiarity with group process, and an awareness of the relationship between group process and professional development. They, therefore, enter the portfolio peer group with an enhanced ability to use the group to meet a variety of needs. Portfolio participants work independently to construct their own portfolios. However, as they join in dialogue with group members, they once again become a community of individuals working together to: reflect on their own practice, discover patterns and connections between their own experiences and those of their peers, and articulate their personal discoveries about the relation of theory to practice.

Situated in this context of clear institutional mission, shared faculty beliefs about importance of reflective teaching, and courses and advisement that systematically emphasize and value reflection as a means of integrating theory and practice, the portfolio process appears to be a valuable instrument for promoting the synthesis of values and practices. The process appears to help teachers to look candidly at themselves and the contexts in which they teach, recognize constraints, identify promising practices, and set new courses for action.

> *I have learned several things from the process of constructing this portfolio. First of all, I realized the extent to which I have struggled and still struggle to surmount the traditional conserving influences which shaped my existence. As a child of a middle-class African-American family, I was raised to realize success in the way in which society defined it. ...I discovered by constructing this portfolio just how much I had internalized the notion that my work as a progressive educator was not legitimate because it did not fall in line with the conserving traditions of the schools at which I worked....In particular, I was reluctant to even*

reflect on several of the artifacts in this portfolio because I became convinced that they did not reflect sufficient intellectual rigor on my part.

...The process of constructing the portfolio prodded me to review and, ultimately, to reevaluate these curricula. The process of constructing the portfolio prodded me to review and ultimately to reevaluate these curricula. As I analyzed them, I rediscovered the soundness of the methods employed. I learned that I had a reason to be proud of my work and that my feelings of guilt and shame over these artifacts were merely the result of forces within conserving institutions clouding the clarity of my vision. I am grateful that the portfolio process prodded me to review these artifacts, recenter myself and see their inherent worth. ...[The process] made me aware that conserving institutions are not for me. I need to be in a more progressive setting in order to have greater faith in my teaching skills and in order to construct and implement more progressive curricula and continue to learn by so doing. (Harrod, 1996)

The Impact of Context

Both historically and structurally, Bank Street has created a context in which reflective teaching is highly valued. Yet, the question remains: Despite the strength of the intent, how do we know that the outcomes are consonant with the goals?

External Documentation:

From a theoretical perspective, we know that coherence between goals and pedagogy is an important criteria for effective teaching (Dewey, 1938; Lieberman & Miller, 1991; McLaughlin, 1991; Garcia & Pearson, 1994). The more pervasive this coherence is across a range of structures, the more likely it is that the needs of a diverse student body will be met. Supporting this theoretical perspective are the findings of a study of Bank Street's preservice program conducted by NCREST (National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching) during the 1996-97 academic year. Using a range of inquiry methods including observations of course sessions and advisement groups, field visits to schools, individual and focus group interviews, and a related survey of education school graduates and employers, the findings of the study documented: 1. pervasive connections between the institutional mission and the theory and pedagogy underpinning the courses of study across programs and 2. a strong relationship between institutional goals and the perceived attitudes, beliefs, and practices of graduates (Darling-Hammond, 19977; Darling-Hammond and Macdonald, 1996).

Internal Documentation:

In addition to external documentation, internal evaluation is conducted on an ongoing basis. There are many formal and informal opportunities for faculty and students to exchange perspectives through ongoing conversation and through written communications. And while the hierarchy of power and authority that exists within any institution inevitably silences some voices, the evidence is that the institutional emphasis on trustbuilding coupled with multiple forums and multiple formats for reflection and feedback enables most students to share their feelings. When written evaluations are solicited, as they generally are, the thoughtfulness of students' responses suggests that 1: students feel that their words are valued and 2. that habits of reflection are being developed.

Two such responses from students who early in their programs had difficulty engaging in the reflective process as defined on pages two to five of this paper are offered below.

> ***Advisement:*** *[The advisement process] was helpful in so many ways. First it provided me with the emotional support that helped me to get through the struggles of being a first year classroom teacher. My advisor and conference group helped me to look deeper into my philosophy and teaching strategies. They helped me to understand and analyze my students' needs. (Program Evaluation, Reading Program Alumna, 2000)*

> ***Portfolio:*** *The portfolio process has given me a window to view who I am. It has helped me to identify what I believe in, to examine and reflect on what I do and what needs to be done. By reflecting on my life experiences, I have been able to take a measure of responsibility for my own professional development. In other words, I have been able to carefully process (self -assess) the specific things that I have done with children. This has helped me to gain new perspectives that, hopefully will help me improve the quality of my teaching. (Portfolio Candidate, 3/2000)*

Embedded Challenges:

> *The desire to teach in a certain way does not magically erase all of my own negative experiences. We are a product of our experiences. We tend to teach the way we were taught. Struggling against this tendency is an exhausting and yet exhilarating effort. It means, on my part, a long- term commitment to reworking me. (Portfolio Project, 1997)*

The words of this student suggest just how complex is the practice of reflective teaching - for faculty and students alike. Even within the context of Bank Street, there are many challenges to be faced.

Developing New Habits of Mind

The dialogical processes designed to foster reflection are intended to be liberating and empowering. However, for many these are at first disconcerting and problematic. In an end of the semester evaluation of her experience, one student wrote:

> *You asked what surprises I encountered during the semester. My biggest surprise was when you asked me, "What would you like to focus on during this placement?" In all my years of schooling, nobody ever asked me what I wanted to know. I always did - or didn't do - what the teacher told me. At first, your question left me wordless. How should I know what I should be doing? It's your job to tell me, I thought. Then I realized that if I was going to expect my students to be partners in their learning, I needed to learn how to be responsible for my own learning. (Advisement Evaluation Form, 12/95)*

The success of most students has been directly related to their ability to be "good students", to skillfully anticipate and fulfill their teachers' expectations, to silence their own questions, to know their place in the clearly articulated hierarchy of knowledge. Now the rules are changed

For some students, engagement in reflective dialogue is difficult, accepting responsibility for their own learning even harder. Some have difficulty listening to anyone but "the teacher". Others find making meaningful connections between what they have known, what they study in courses, and what they see in classrooms to be extremely difficult.

It is not only students who are challenged by the expectations for collaborative learning. Helping students to assume responsibility for their own work is in many ways a daunting task. It disrupts the well-entrenched model of passive education, the niceties of social conduct, and, for women, it challenges many of the basic constructs of gender socialization.

Like their students, many faculty members have been socialized and educated in hierarchical settings. They have garnered their professional accomplishments by mastering the same traditional hurdles of schools and schooling as have the teachers and prospective teachers with whom they work. At times it may be difficult - even painful - to separate oneself from the position of expert. Moreover, despite an articulated belief in education as developmental interaction (Nager & Shapiro, 2000),

faculty members do not always have a broad repertoire of strategies for enacting this belief.

Faculty often face the challenge of balancing epistemologies of personal and professional knowledge that sometimes compete. A belief that true learning is reflective conflicts with the pressure to "train teachers in a timely fashion". Moreover, faculty feel a sense of responsibility for the children their advisees will teach. For faculty as for students, the Greek chorus of "more... faster... give them all you know" is hard to silence.

And for new faculty, as yet unused to a student center process of higher education, the Banks Street structures can be difficult. Faculty serving as portfolio mentors frequently find it difficult to discriminate between students who are productively engaged in a creative process and students who are actually missing skills and/ or information.

> *I have to keep asking myself: "Do I not understand what this student is saying because of my lack of knowledge, or because his or her thought processes are not adequately grounded and/or articulated." (Faculty interview. 1995).*

Intervening too soon risks preventing students from shaping their own ideas into their constructions of meaning and discouraging their "deepening capacity to wonder" (Biber, 1958). Failure to recognize the need for help, on the other hand, risks leaving students without the tools they need to function autonomously and, ultimately, unable to meet the needs of the communities of learners they serve (Freidus, 2000).

Feelings of Risk and Vulnerability

There are certain challenges that, almost of necessity, counterpoint the strength of a context that is as articulate, cohesive, and long-standing as that of Bank Street. In some ways, despite the power differential, it is safer for students to voice conflicting ideas about teaching and learning than it is for new faculty. It is expected that students are at the College to develop the concepts and practices that are valued. Faculty are expected to be knowledgeable and comfortable with the cognitive dissonance that so often accompanies reflective practice. There are fewer safe structures available to support them in their questioning of the process.

Despite Mitchell's charge for constant reflection on and evaluation of ongoing practices, there are some issues and some language that are looked on with disdain by

many who have moved through the institution's portals first as students and now as faculty. This can lead faculty members, especially those new to the community, to feel anxious and vulnerable. Chosen for their diversity as well as their shared beliefs, many have found themselves sharing thoughts that are greeted with silence. These experiences elicit feelings of insider and outsider that work against their own growth and development, that of the institution, and, ultimately, that of the students they teach. While there is no question that, despite these silences, newcomers are shaping institutional perspectives as they, themselves, are being shaped by the context of the institution, it is an ongoing challenge to keep all voices engaged in healthy dialogue. It might be said that the strength of the institution is its cohesive discourse; it could also be said that the weakness of the community is its cohesive discourse.

Meeting the Needs of Today's Classrooms

One of the most powerful challenges that the Bank Street community currently faces is posed by the realities of today's classrooms. Current mandates from the state call for the reshaping and rectifying all credentialing programs. As faculty and administration work together to provide programs that better prepare teachers to meet the needs of all learners, there is a renewed need to grapple with such questions as: "How can the voices of all stakeholders be included in the 'grand conversation' of education? What counts as knowledge? Whose knowledge counts?" In this context, competing traditions and competing disciplines with competing epistemologies have the potential to create additional feelings of risk for new and veteran faculty alike. The challenge here is both affective and cognitive as the college works to conserve traditional values while pursuing new structures and opportunities that will "widen the circle of affiliation" (Vascellaro, 1999) while preserving and/or adapting the cohesion that has been so relevant to the fostering the development of reflective practice.

Conclusion

There is strong evidence that reflective practice can be both nurtured and extended within the context of teacher education programs. While the development of reflective practice is often viewed as the responsibility of individual course instructors and/or field supervisors, institutional visions and structures contribute significantly to the process. "Communities of practice"(Putnam & Borko, 2000) such as that at Bank

Street support reflective practice through a shared vision of transformative teaching, an institutional mission that clearly articulates this vision, and program structures and instructional practices that build upon each other and are consonant with the institutional vision.

New pedagogies appear to be most effective when they are mindfully designed to deepen and extend students' ongoing experiences and understanding. Pedagogies, like portfolios, that are consciously designed to nurture simultaneous consideration of public and private, individual and communal, personal and professional funds of knowledge appear to be particularly valuable in developing the habits of mind that allow teachers to engage in reflective practice and find or create for themselves the contexts that support this process for themselves and for their students.

The presence of a cohesive discourse community supports the development of reflective habits of mind for teachers and teacher educators alike. It must be remembered, however, that even reflective practice can run the risk of becoming a form of parochialism. Participants must always be on guard to keep the context of the dialogue conducive to safe expression of all points of view. This is a goal that - even in the most knowledgeable and well-intended communities - is much easier to set than to achieve.

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